

Boston and East Lindsey Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments

CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT METHODOLOGY

February 2008

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Responses should be received no later than Monday 31st March 2008.



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Introduction

Planning Policy Statement 3: *Housing* (PPS3) requires all local planning authorities, working with key housing development stakeholders, to undertake a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). This will be a key evidence base in support of the Local Development Framework's strategy for delivering sufficient land for housing to meet the community's projected needs. It will expand on, and supersede, the Councils' Urban Capacity Studies.

The main purposes of a SHLAA are to:-

- Identify sites with potential for housing in and around as many settlements as possible for at least ten years from the adoption of the LDF;
- Assess their housing potential; and
- Assess when they are likely to be developed;

Preferably, it should cover a sub-regional housing market area but may, where necessary, be restricted to a local authority area. Where insufficient sites can be found, it should provide evidence to support the release of greenfield sites in broad locations. Only in exceptional circumstances should an allowance be made for windfall sites in the first ten years.

The SHLAA does not in itself determine whether a specific site should be allocated for housing – this is a job for the LDF. Its underlying aim is to demonstrate the Council's ability to be able to meet the strategic housing needs of the District over the lifetime of the LDF.

In drawing up this methodology, the Councils have been guided by the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) document "*Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments; Practice Guidance*" – July 2007 and by Annex C of PPS 3.

Stages in the Boston and East Lindsey SHLAAs

STAGE	OUTPUT
<u>Stage 1</u> Planning the assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Explore partnership working-Identify stakeholders / consultation-Define study area-Set timetable
<u>Stage 2</u> Sourcing sites and information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Identify sites to be included in the study-Identify sources of housing data
<u>Stage 3</u> Desktop and site surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-review existing information-undertake site surveys-record survey findings
<u>Stage 4</u> Housing sites assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-assess suitability of sites-estimate site capacity/yield-assess availability of sites-assess deliverability of sites
<u>Stage 5</u> Site assessment review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-undertake risk assessment-draw up an indicative housing trajectory-identify any shortfalls
<u>Stage 6 (for East Lindsey only)</u> Assessing housing windfall sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-measure past windfall contribution-estimate future windfall allowance
<u>Stage 7 (if required)</u> Assessing broad locations for housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-identify and test broad locations for brownfield and greenfield development within and outside settlements
<u>Stage 8</u> Final assessment report	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-set content of report-consultation on draft assessment-draw up monitoring methodology-publish consultation report

Stage 1 – Planning the Assessment

1.1 Working in Partnership?

The Coastal Lincolnshire Housing Market Area comprises the local authority areas of East Lindsey and Boston.

East Lindsey and Boston share a common boundary and the retail and travel to work catchment area for Boston takes in several settlements in the southern parishes of East Lindsey, including Sibsey, Frithville, New Leake, Gipsey Bridge, Friskney, Stickney and, to a lesser extent, Wainfleet.

However, whilst the pattern of development in the Boston District is essentially urban-focussed, with smaller satellite settlements, that of East Lindsey is hugely polycentric, with multiple small towns and service centres within a four-tier settlement hierarchy, and a system of overlapping rural catchment areas.

Whilst the cross-boundary housing market influences must clearly be taken into account in the final assessment of an SHLAA for both local authorities, in view of the striking differences in HMA characteristics within each neighbouring authority, we feel there would be no mutual benefits in preparing a joint SHLAA.

In addition, the timetables for the preparation of Development Plan Documents (DPDs) in the Local Development Schemes (LDSs) for the two authorities do not run concurrently. Binding each authority to a single SHLAA timetable could incur a delay to one or other of the LDS timetables. Therefore, we propose that the SHLAAs should proceed within discrete, but mutually compatible, timetables.

However, we propose a working partnership between Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council, in jointly constructing and agreeing a common methodology, integrating timescales wherever possible, sharing information and combining stakeholder consultation.

1.2 Resourcing, and scrutinising the quality of, the SHLAA

Project teams, consisting of the professional planning policy officers of the respective local authorities, will undertake the assessment. Consultation, survey and analysis work, and publication of the final report will be funded by the budgets of the respective Council's Planning Services.

Boston and East Lindsey Councils will jointly agree the SHLAA methodology, following consultation with all key stakeholders.

In East Lindsey the progress of the assessment will be reported to and monitored by the Council's Planning Policy Committee which will, in turn, report to the Council's Executive Board and full Council for any formal Council decisions.

In Boston Borough, the Council's Cabinet will be the decision-making body.

1.3 Identifying Stakeholders

Boston and East Lindsey share a peripheral geographical position on the Lincolnshire coast and, consequently, share many statutory and non-statutory stakeholders. There is considerable merit in forming an extended tri-partite partnership to progress the two SHLAAs in a parallel and co-ordinated way.

To begin with, we intend to consult with, and invite contributions from, those central and local government agencies, statutory undertakers and infrastructure providers, housebuilders, property agents and social housing agencies listed in Appendix A. The majority of those listed will have interest in the provision of housing in both local authority areas and it is important that stakeholders are able to consider the "bigger picture" across both SHLAAs throughout their preparation.

Direct consultation with key stakeholders will be accompanied by publicised open invitations to contribute to the SHLAAs and, should any additional stakeholders emerge, they shall be added to the list in Appendix A.

There will be two formal stakeholder consultation exercises :-

- The first will be a scoping exercise to form and agree the methodology and to invite suggestions for sites that fall into one of the categories listed in stage 2.1 to be included in the study.
- All stakeholders will also be consulted on a draft final assessment report(s) prior to approval and publication by the two local authorities. This is to help ensure that the agreed methodology has been followed but, in particular, it shall seek confirmation - or correction - from landowners and the housing development industry of the draft assessment's judgements on availability or achievability of the sites for development (see stages 4.3 and 4.4).

In addition, the local authorities may consult informally with stakeholders – collectively or individually - at any stage of the assessment, in search of particular advice, information or opinion.

1.4 Defining the Study Areas

The East Lindsey SHLAA will cover the District Council's administrative area. East Lindsey is a deeply rural district with some 190 settlements, only 41 of which support populations of over 500. The remainder are scattered across the district, having an average population of just 236. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely that the majority of these smaller settlements will be targeted for significant housing development. Their contribution to the overall provision of housing land across the District, therefore, will be minimal.

We propose to survey those more sustainable settlements where new housing development is likely to occur or be acceptable under the terms of current national, regional and local policy guidance. As a start, the study will cover those settlements identified in the 1995 Local Plan as being sufficiently sustainable to warrant the allocation of, or provision for, land for housing within a defined settlement "envelope".

As an essential part of drawing up the Core Strategy, the Council shall apply sustainability criteria to all settlements to establish their relative growth capabilities. Should this exercise show any of these settlements to be unsustainable locations for housing, or other settlements to be sustainable locations, then the list of settlements to be included in the SHLAA would be modified accordingly.

The Boston SHLAA will cover the Borough Council's administrative area and, in compliance with the requirement of the Department of Communities and Local Government to survey as many settlements as possible, shall examine all 29 settlements that have a built up area or settlement boundary defined on the current Local Plan. These comprise, in alphabetical order:-

Algarkirk, Amber Hill, Benington, Bicker, Boston, Butterwick, Fishtoft, Fosdyke, Frampton, Frampton West, Freiston, Haltoft End, Holland Fen, Hubbert's Bridge, Kirton, Kirton End, Kirton Holme, Langrick Bridge, Leake Commonside, Leverton, Old Leake, Scrane End, Sutterton, Swineshead, Swineshead Bridge, Wigtoft, Wrangle, Wrangle Common, Wyberton.

1.5 Setting the timetable for the SHLAAs

Boston SHLAA

Consulting on, and agreeing, methodology	- Feb – Apr 2008
Surveys and assessment	- Apr – Jun 2008
Consultation on final draft report	- July – Aug 2008
Adoption and publication of final report	- Oct 2008

East Lindsey SHLAA

Consulting on, and agreeing, methodology	- Feb – Apr 2008
Surveys and assessment	- Apr - Jun 2008
Consultation on final draft report	- July- Aug 2008
Adoption and publication of final report	- Oct 2008

Stage 2 – Sourcing sites and information

2.1 Identifying the categories of sites to be included in the study

We shall essentially follow the DCLG's practice guidance by including the following categories of potential housing sites in the study:-

- sites allocated for housing in an extant development plan
- Sites allocated (or with permission) for employment uses
- Sites for which the allocated use is no longer required
- Sites having (part) unimplemented planning permissions for housing
- Vacant and derelict land
- Surplus public sector land
- Sites in non-residential use with redevelopment potential (including car parks, commercial premises and over the shop premises)
- Empty homes
- Residential areas with space for intensification or redesign
- Previously undeveloped (greenfield) sites within settlements
- Locations where regeneration strategies are actively being pursued
- Broad areas of greenfield sites alongside settlements (only if a shortfall of available sites is identified to warrant consideration of urban extensions).

We shall exclude from assessment those sites falling within nationally designated sites, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest or Scheduled Ancient Monuments, where the housing potential can be generally recognised as non-existent.

Neither shall we, at this stage, identify and assess individual "exceptions" sites for affordable housing. We feel such an action would be counter-productive in raising hope value of land (thus reducing their potential as affordable housing sites), would not be able to take account of the local fluctuations in need over time, and would include so many potential sites, especially in such a deeply rural area with some 200 villages, to be effectively meaningless.

We propose that the provision of such exceptions sites will be determined through pro-active policies in LDFs, supported by continuously up-dated housing needs assessments. It may not be possible, therefore, to include in

this study an overall “allowance” for numbers of housing planned for such sites over the LDF period.

2.2 Identifying the sources of information

We will use the following main sources of information to identify potential sites for housing to be included in the study:-

- Current local plans – settlement proposals
- Records of planning permissions for housing development
- Planning applications refusals
- Pre-application enquiries
- Records of sites submitted by landowners/developers for inclusion in previous local plans and emerging LDFs
- Current Urban Capacity Studies
- Housing completion records
- Housing land availability records / National Land Use Database
- Empty properties Register
- Register of surplus public sector land
- Property Agents’ records of vacant premises
- Personal knowledge of Development Control case officers
- Ordnance Survey maps
- Aerial photos
- Site surveys

Stage 3 – Desktop and site surveys

3.1 Reviewing existing information

As a desktop exercise:-

- The location and development status of buildings, sites and land with potential for housing development will be extracted from the sources identified in stage 2 (except for the site surveys); and
 - be recorded within the categories also identified in stage 2; and
 - be transferred on to base maps in readiness for the site surveys.
- All sites over 0.1 hectare shall be recorded.
- Where known, details of landowners and/or developer agents will be recorded.
- Any duplicated sites shall be identified and removed.

We propose to investigate the potential of sites as small as 0.1 hectare because such sites, in the past, have made a significant contribution to

the District's housing supply, particularly in the smaller of the more sustainable settlements.

In addition, we will include, in the study, even smaller sites when considering the housing potential of individual non-residential properties and of unimplemented planning consents on small sites.

3.2 Undertaking the site surveys

During street by street surveys of all 97 settlements, each of the sites identified from the desktop exercise shall be visited and the following information recorded:-

- Current use or category of site (according to those listed in Stage 2)
- Size of site
- Site boundaries
- Significant on-site and peripheral features
- Development constraints (on- and off-site)

In addition, any new sites discovered during the course of a street by street survey, not previously identified from the desktop exercise, will be recorded in the same way.

All surveys will be undertaken by a minimum of two fully briefed Council officers, interchanging regularly to ensure all surveys are conducted in a consistent fashion throughout.

3.3 Recording survey findings

- Survey information gathered on paper base maps shall be transferred to a GIS data base.
- All site records will be entered and maintained electronically on Excel spreadsheets/Access database and be cross-referenced to the GIS maps.

Stage 4 – Housing Sites Assessment

4.1 Assessing the sites' suitability for housing development

The following factors will be considered to assess a site's suitability for housing development, now or in the future:-

- Does it contribute to, or detract from, the creation of sustainable communities?

- Previously allocated or permitted, but undeveloped, sites will generally be suitable but have circumstances changed sufficiently to reduce their suitability?
- Are there overriding planning policy objections or constraints?
- Are there overriding physical problems or constraints?
- Would development of the site cause unacceptably harmful impacts to people or the environment, either on or off the site?

Only where a site fails these tests and there is no action available to overcome the constraints will it be deemed to be unsuitable for housing development and shall be discounted from the study at this stage.

4.2 Estimating the potential housing capacity of each suitable site

The DCLG's practice guidance advocates applying existing or emerging planning policy on housing density to calculate site capacities. Policy H7 of Boston Borough Council's Interim Plan (non-statutory Development Control Policy) – February 2006, stipulates a minimum site density of 30 dwellings per hectare (dph), except where exceptional site circumstances may justify a lesser provision. In the absence of any up to date local policy on housing density, East Lindsey District Council is guided by paragraph 47 of PPS 3 – Housing, which also advocates a minimum density of 30 dph.

But this cannot be an exact science. The housing capacity of different sites of the same size will vary according to the sites' shape, orientation, on-site constraints, infrastructure requirements and proximity to buildings nearby as well as being influenced by the local character and the type and size of houses to be built.

Larger sites will generally be capable of absorbing the varying influences of such constraints and, therefore, we propose to apply a density of 30 dph to all sites of 0.4 hectare (1 acre) or more to estimate their potential capacity.

On sites smaller than 0.4 hectare, we shall take 30dph as a starting point and will re-assess the site's capacity to take account of the constraints and influences highlighted above. This may require drawing up and testing sketch layouts and comparison with other permitted or completed housing schemes in the locality.

In particular, we shall follow the lead of paragraph 46 of PPS 3 in also having regard to the following when estimating a site's desirable net housing density and subsequent potential housing capacity:-

- the level of housing demand and availability of housing land in the locality;

- the capacity of infrastructure, services and facilities, including green space;
- the need to use land efficiently to reduce the effects of climate change;
- accessibility, especially the availability of public transport;
- local character;
- the desirability for high quality housing design.

In the more sustainable locations, such as in and around town centres, densities in excess of 30 dph may be achievable. The potential capacity of converting or adapting existing buildings will vary on a site by site basis and will be assessed primarily by comparison with similar permitted or completed projects elsewhere.

These site capacity estimates will, cumulatively, provide an overall assessment of housing land availability across the study areas but they shall not be used to pre-judge the development of a housing density policy in the forthcoming Boston and East Lindsey Core Strategies.

4.3 Assessing the sites' availability for housing development

A judgement will be made for each site on the basis of the best information available at the time, including:-

- freedom from ownership problems, including ransom strips, multiple ownership, tenancy conditions;
- written commitment to development, or to sell for development, presented by developer/owner;
- existing planning consent (although this cannot, in itself, be a sound indicator of availability);
- any evidence of previous procrastination on development on the site.

4.4 Assessing the sites' achievability for housing development

We need to be confident that a site is capable of being developed within a specified timescale to be determined in the LDF. We will consult with a forum of local development agents, perhaps including Developers, Surveyors and Estate Agents. The essential role of this forum will be to form a consensus view on the economic viability of the sites and, if possible, the development industry's capacity to build and sell the housing. This will require investigating:-

- the changing housing market factors in the locality;
- the relative likely development costs of the site, compared with others in the locality; and

- the existing commitments and track-record of the developer, if known.

The validity of these availability and achievability assessments will be further tested through the consultation exercise on the final draft assessment report (see stage 8.2).

Stage 5 - Site assessment review and indicative housing trajectory

5.1 Undertaking a risk assessment to identify and overcome constraints

We shall cumulate and present the foregoing assessments in the form of a risk assessment that will identify all constraints and offer suitable actions to overcome them. Where constraints are found to be insuperable, the sites will be withdrawn from further consideration at this stage. Details relating to all sites discounted at any stage of the assessment will be retained in study in the interests of transparency.

5.2 Calculating the housing land availability trajectory

From the results of the risk assessment we shall prepare a housing trajectory, which will identify how much housing can be expected to be provided by those categories of sites identified in stage 2.1 over the forthcoming 10 and 15 year periods.

This will establish if there are any shortfalls or local imbalances in potential housing provision. This, in turn, will require further assessment to consider additional contributions from "windfall" sites and "greenfield" sites in broad locations within, adjoining or outside urban areas.

Stage 6 - (*this stage applies to East Lindsey only*) - Assessment of windfall sites

6.1 Measuring past windfall sites' contribution to housing provision

PPS 3 – Housing advocates not including an allowance for windfall sites for the first ten years of the LDF, unless there are justifiable local circumstances. Windfall sites, by definition, are those sites that we cannot predict coming forward for development (usually because they

are being used for another use at the time of survey) but are capable of satisfying planning policies for new housing development

Over the period of the current local plans, windfall sites have made a significant contribution to the provision of housing development in both local authority areas. In East Lindsey, for example, some 1769 homes out of a total of 3692 (48%) were built on windfall sites between 2001 and 2007.

Although this high level of available windfall sites cannot be assured far into the future, recent trends appear to show only a very gradual reduction in the number of sites coming forward over the years. To ignore such a contribution to housing development potential would risk skewing the findings of the SHLAA.

Therefore, we shall include in the SHLAA, an assessment of the contribution, to date, of windfall sites to housing provision.

6.2 Estimating the future contribution of windfall sites

Based on past trends, current and emerging market conditions, and making allowance for a deceleration in the release of such sites, we shall project forward an estimate for the contribution of windfall sites to housing provision in the study areas.

Stage 7 – (if required) – Assessment of sites and broad locations for housing outside settlements

7.1 Identifying and testing other locations for housing

Where the SHLAA has identified a potential housing shortfall over the planned period, it may be necessary to investigate the potential for targeting brownfield or greenfield sites and broad locations (ie not site specific) within, adjacent to, or outside existing settlements.

Clearly, such an approach will impact on the policy options for the LDF and we must be careful not to pre-judge strategic housing distribution proposals that are more appropriately considered in the Core Strategy.

It will be important, therefore, to assess only those locations that satisfy essential sustainability criteria, which will include the following:-

- where essential infrastructure already exists or is planned;
- where important landscapes will not be degraded;

- where the need and opportunity for economic and community benefits have been identified;
- where coalescence of settlements would be avoided.

Where sites or broad locations have been identified we shall calculate their potential housing capacity taking account of the expected mix of development and any need to provide supporting neighbourhood facilities. We shall also assess the suitability, availability and achievability of each site and broad location.

Stage 8 - Final assessment report

8.1 Setting the content of the final assessment report

A report will be prepared for each local authority to include the following:-

- A statement confirming the aim of the SHLAA to provide a key evidence base for the housing distribution strategy and housing site allocations in the Core Strategy and Settlement Proposals DPDs of the respective LDFs;
- The agreed SHLAA methodology;
- A statement of stakeholder consultation and participation;
- A list of sites and broad locations (if necessary), cross-referenced to maps, showing their locations and boundaries;
- An assessment of the suitability, availability and achievability of each identified site;
- The potential net housing capacity for each site and broad location;
- A risk assessment identifying constraints on site development and suggested actions to overcome them;
- (In East Lindsey only) a calculated allowance for potential housing on windfall sites;
- Mechanisms for monitoring and review of the SHLAA

8.2 Consulting with stakeholders on final draft assessment

We will consult with the community and all stakeholders on the draft final assessment report(s) prior to approval and publication by the two local authorities. This is to ensure that the agreed methodology has been followed and to reinforce the soundness of the document as a key evidence base for the housing distribution strategy and housing site allocations in the Core Strategy and Settlement Proposals DPDs of the respective LDFs.

In particular, it shall seek confirmation - or correction - from landowners and the housing development industry of the draft SHLAA's judgements on availability or achievability of the sites and broad locations for development (see 4.3 and 4.4).

8.3 Drawing up a monitoring methodology

Once completed, the SHLAAs shall be kept up to date by an annual review to be included in the Councils' Annual Monitoring Reports. These reports shall record:-

- Progress on sites originally recorded as being under construction;
- Progress on sites with planning permission;
- Planning applications submitted on sites or broad locations;
- Progress on the removal of constraints on site development;
- Any new constraints on site development;
- Progress on the development of windfall sites;
- The emergence of new potential sites.

8.4 Publishing the assessment report

Following approval of the assessment report(s) by the Councils' responsible body, the Councils will inform all key stakeholders of its publication and, through advertisement in the local media, invite inspection of the document at specified venues and on the Councils' websites.

Appendix A - Stakeholders

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